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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001158

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2018

TAGS: ASEC PGOV PREL KPKO UN AU SU

SUBJECT: UMMA PARLIAMENTARIAN TURABI URGES SAF-US DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT COOPERATION, PROVIDES INSIDE LOOK AT ALL PARTY
DARFUR INITIATIVE

REF: KHARTOUM 1117

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In a July 29 meeting with CDA Fernandez, Umma Party Parliamentarian Mudawi al Turabi claimed to have Presidential approval to initiate discussions for cooperation on civil affairs between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the U.S. Defense Department, including engineering projects, relief efforts and other confidence-building measures. He also provided insight into the mechanics of the all-party initiative recently trumpeted by President Bashir (Reftel), and how it is being used to formulate an international and domestic political response to address the crisis in Darfur.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Having recently returned from Washington, DC, Turabi was eager to share with CDA Fernandez what he claimed was his ongoing correspondence with a Col. Shannon Beebe of the Office of the U.S. Army's Deputy Chief of Staff. While in Washington, Turabi maintained that he had met with Col. Beebe and various constituencies within the U.S. Department of Defense, to whom he proposed a renewal of long dormant U.S.-Sudanese military cooperation. Acknowledging the political sensitivities involved in such an endeavor, Turabi proposed cooperation on civil affairs, such as engineering projects, expanding Darfur airstrips or relief efforts, possibly in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He cited hydroelectric power projects as one area of potential cooperation, noting that it would be "of good value to Sudanese citizens." When informed by CDA Fernandez that Post has attempted to engage the Ministry of Defense on such issues in the past to no avail, Turabi asserted that this time it would be different, as it had been blessed by the Defense Minister, Major General Abdul Rahim Hussein, and by President Bashir himself. Bashir had coincidentally been visiting the MOD the same day that Turabi did and had approved such an idea. CDA Fernandez then reminded Turabi that whatever his correspondence with the Pentagon to date, any such initiative must be introduced first through U.S. Embassy Khartoum. Turabi promised an outreach from the Ministry of Defense to the Embassy within the next few weeks, and also said he would forward his correspondence with the Pentagon to CDA Fernandez.

¶3. (C) Turabi then proceeded to shed some light on the all-party Darfur initiative announced by President Bashir during his recent trip to the region (Reftel). Turabi stated that the initiative is taking shape with the formation of six committees addressing i) political solutions; ii) humanitarian solutions; iii) international engagement; iv) public information; v) reconciliation; and vi) development. The committees, he said, will be staffed by representatives

of the 32 existing political parties and aided by civil society and academia. Each committee would have about 15 members. He described the initiative as an all-inclusive way to meld the various constituencies' proposals to resolve Darfur crisis. Turabi stated that Sadig al Mahdi will likely play a big role and chair one of the committees, though privately he expressed skepticism of al Mahdi as a tool for resolution of the crisis. He also noted the involvement of powerful insiders Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie and NCP Political Secretary Mandour al Mahdi, each of whose engagement gives credence to the seriousness with which the regime is approaching the initiative. The initiative would be followed by some sort of mass meeting or conference, including Darfuri rebels and civilians, and involving the international community as observers.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Turabi's involvement in the all-party Darfur initiative provides an inside look at how party leaders are coming together to formulate a plan that will serve as both a domestic political response and as an answer to the international community on Darfur. In order to be successful however, the initiative must transcend the emphasis on process and form to achieve substantive results in the very near future. His rosy view on Sudanese eagerness to cooperate with the US military (which assumes that we want to cooperate with SAF) is totally at odds with the regime's track record. MOD has stymied approval of USMILOBs for UNAMID, kept DLO and Charge at a distance, and blocked travel by embassy officers to Darfur that had been approved by other Sudanese government agencies. While we have no reason to doubt Turabi's account, it just doesn't ring true and we will be watching to see if there is any substance at all to this confused story. End

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comment.

FERNANDEZ